

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 are pending.

Claims 1-10 stand rejected.

Claims 1, 3 and 7 have been amended.

Claim 5 has been cancelled without prejudice.

No new matter has been added.

Claims 1-4 and 6-10 are hereby submitted for reconsideration.

In the Office Action, the Examiner has both objected to and rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, because the term “tubular screw contact” is indefinite.

The term “tubular screw contacts” refers to elements 2 and 3, as shown in Figs. 1-4 and as introduced in the specification on page 6. The contacts refer to the elements where the conductor is held in place within the connector. It is termed a “tubular screw” contact because it is tubular in shape and accommodates a screw (8) through bore (4) to hold the conductor (10) in place. This description is supported in the specification on line 22 of page 6 through line 24 on page 7 and in Figs. 1-4.

However, in order to avoid confusion, the term “tubular screw contact” has been amended to read “tubular contact” so as to avoid confusion with the similarly claimed element of the “screw” (element 8) which is used to retain the conductor in the tubular

contact.

In view of these comments and amendments, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to and rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 112 be withdrawn.

Likewise, claim 7 has been amended to properly claim dependence from independent claim 1, and Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn as well.

Turning to the substantive rejections, the Examiner has indicated that claims 1, 2 and 4-8 are rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being obvious over De Buyst (EP 1,206,024 A1). Claim 3 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over De Buyst in view of Auclair (U.S. Patent No. 6,325,678). Applicants note that the Examiner has indicated that both claims 9 and 10 would be allowed if re-written in independent format.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's contention and submit the following remarks in response.

The present invention as claimed in independent claim 1, is directed to a connector for connecting two medium-voltage electrical power cables, each including at least one conductor surrounded by an insulative jacket. The connector has tubular contacts adapted to connect together stripped ends of the conductors inserted into the tubular contacts and retained in the tubular contacts by means of screws. At one end at least, *extension means are integrally formed with the connector* and adapted to cover a portion of the insulative jacket of the cable over a length greater than 10mm.

By including the extension means (elements 6 and 7 in the specification) directly into the connector, they do not require any additional manipulation after the conductors have been placed within the contacts.

The cited prior art, EP 1,206,024 (herein after the '024 reference) discloses a connector that makes use of separate rubber caps 30a and 30b which need to be fitted onto the connector and over the conductor *after* the conductor has been fitted within the contacts. For example, in the '024 reference in column 6, lines 1-5, state:

“Once conductors 12 and 23 are fixed in their respective parts 41 and 42 of the connector 40, the later parts are interconnected and the bolts are sheared, the two molded caps 30, say 30a and 30b, are slid back over the connector 40 until the cover it completely.”

Such an arrangement is in sharp contrast to the present invention where the extension means are integrally molded to the connector. For example, there is no teaching or suggestion in the '024 reference for an extension means integrally formed with the connector and adapted to cover a portion of the insulative jacket.

As stated above, the present invention does not require any additional manipulation after the conductors have been placed in the contacts. It is specifically for this reason that the present invention is distinguished from the '024 reference in the background section of the specification of the present invention on page 3, line 31 to page 4 line 2 which states:

“This kind of arrangement (referring to the '024 reference) provides a result that is satisfactorily from the electrical point of view but is difficult to fit. Two separate caps separate from the connector must be threaded over the ends of the cable before connecting the cables by means of the connector and then pushed over the connector before fitting the insulative sheath.”

In view of the forgoing, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of independent claim 1 be withdrawn. Also, as claims 2-4 and 6-10 depend from independent claim 1, they should be allowed for the same reason.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention as claimed in claims 1-

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10 is now in condition for allowance, the earliest possible notice of which is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner feels that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of this application he is invited to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted

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